Calculating Yarn Length for Long-tail Cast-on – Two Methods
by Marsha White

One of my favourite cast-ons is the Long-Tail cast-on method. The edge is flexible and it looks great on either side.

One of the tricky bits of this cast-on is how long to make the tail. It's so easy to under-estimate (and have to rip out and start over again) or over-estimate (and have a very long tail.)

There are several different ideas about estimating the tail length and these are a few good ones found in my research.

◆ A) Cast on 10% of the stitches (sts) required. Rip it out, and measure the length of the tail yarn used. Then measure out 10 times what was used, plus an extra 10” for weaving in and a safety margin.

◆ B) Skip the calculations and simply use two ends to work the cast-on. You will have two extra ends to weave in, but no worries that you won't have enough yarn for the cast-on.

A) Step 1: Wind off a tail, and with a different coloured thread, mark the starting point of your tail end. Cast on 10% of the required sts. (i.e. 24 sts for cast-on of 240 sts)

A) Step 2: With a different coloured yarn mark the end of the tail that was used for the test cast-on.

A) Step 3: Remove the sts from the needle and undo the cast-on. Measure the yarn used between the two coloured markers. Lay the yarn flat but don't pull it tight.

B) Step 1: Either use ends from two balls, or the beginning and ending of a single ball (shown on left.)

B) Step 2: Make a slip knot with the two ends and put onto your needle. You will discard this stitch after your cast-on. Leave a 4-5" tail for weaving in the ends, or leave one end longer if you will use it to seam up a garment.

B) Step 3: Work the required number of sts onto your needles, not counting the slip-knot. Use stitch markers every 10 sts to help with counting sts. After casting on the required sts, cut the 2nd yarn (i.e.the yarn from the outside of the ball.)

B) Step 4: If working from a circular needle, slip off the slip knot st and undo. If working on straights, after knitting the first row, discard the slip-knot at the end of the row (shown above), and undo . Weave in tail ends when garment is complete.

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